

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA  
STATESVILLE DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

APPROXIMATELY \$145,900 IN UNITED  
STATES CURRENCY SEIZED ON  
DECEMBER 10, 2023 IN STATESVILLE, NC

Civil No. 5:24-CV-00145

**VERIFIED COMPLAINT FOR FORFEITURE *IN REM***

NOW COMES the United States of America, Plaintiff herein, by and through Dena J. King, United States Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina, in a civil cause of forfeiture, and respectfully states the following:

**INTRODUCTION**

1. This is a civil action *in rem* against approximately \$145,900.00 in United States Currency seized on September 20, 2023, during a traffic stop in Iredell County, North Carolina (the “Currency”). The Currency was found alongside approximately 45 kilograms of suspected cocaine/fentanyl mixture:



2. The Government is unaware of any legitimate source evidence or legitimate explanation for the Currency, and none was provided in the administrative phase by Claimant.

3. Accordingly, the Currency is subject to forfeiture pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6) because it constitutes money furnished or intended to be furnished by any person in exchange for a controlled substance or listed chemical in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841 and/or 846, is proceeds traceable to such an exchange, and is money used or intended to be used to facilitate a violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841 and/or 846.

### **NATURE OF THE ACTION**

4. Procedures for this action are mandated by 21 U.S.C. § 881, 18 U.S.C. § 983, 19 U.S.C. §§ 1602-1621, and, to the extent applicable, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and accompanying Supplemental Rules for Admiralty or Maritime Claims and Asset Forfeiture Actions.

5. This Court has jurisdiction over this matter by virtue of 28 U.S.C. §§ 1345 and 1355. These statutes confer original jurisdiction to federal district courts of all civil actions, suits, or proceedings commenced by the United States and any action for the forfeiture of property incurred under any act of Congress.

6. Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1395 because the Currency was seized in the Western District of North Carolina.

7. The Currency has been seized and is now within the Western District of North Carolina.

8. Based on the following facts, verified by Drug Enforcement Administration (“DEA”) Task Force Officer (“TFO”) Joshua Hendrick, this action seeks the forfeiture of all right, title, and interest in the Currency.

## FACTS GIVING RISE TO FORFEITURE

9. On December 10, 2023, law enforcement conducted a traffic stop on a tractor-trailer for an observed traffic violation on I-77 North in Iredell County, North Carolina.

10. The tractor-trailer had two occupants, identified as Lorenzo Juan Arreola and Lucio Eduardo Avila-Chavira.

11. During the course of the traffic stop, a second properly trained and certified drug detection canine was deployed in an open-air sniff around the exterior of the tractor-trailer.

12. The K9 positively indicated to the presence of illegal drugs inside the tractor-trailer.

13. A consent search was then performed on the tractor-trailer and its occupants.

14. The search revealed what was later determined to be approximately 45 kilograms of a suspected cocaine/fentanyl mixture in the tractor-trailer:



15. The search also revealed the \$145,900 in United States Currency in the tractor-



trailer:



16. The Currency's packaging was consistent with that used in drug trafficking.
17. The Government is unaware of any evidence suggesting that the Currency has a legitimate source, rather than being given to the occupants of the tractor-trailer by drug traffickers.
18. Likewise, no legitimate explanation or supporting documents were produced in the

administrative phase by Claimant.

**FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF – THE \$145,900.00 IN CURRENCY  
(21 U.S.C § 881(a)(6))**

19. The United States incorporates by reference the allegations set forth in the paragraphs above as if fully set forth herein.

20. The \$145,900.00 in Currency is subject to forfeiture pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 881 (a)(6) because it constitutes money furnished or intended to be furnished by any person in exchange for a controlled substance or listed chemical in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841 and/or 846, is proceeds traceable to such an exchange, and is money used or intended to be used to facilitate a violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841 and/or 846.

**CONCLUSION AND PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

21. By virtue of the foregoing, all right, title, and interest in the Currency vested in the United States at the time of the commissions of the unlawful act giving rise to forfeiture, 21 U.S.C. § 881(h), and has become and is forfeitable to the United States.

WHEREFORE, the United States of America respectfully prays the Court that:

1. A warrant for the arrest of the Currency be issued;
2. Due notice be given to all parties to appear and show cause why the forfeiture should not be decreed;
3. Judgment be entered declaring the Currency to be condemned and forfeited to the United States of America for disposition according to law; and
4. The United States be granted such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper, together with the costs and disbursements of this action, including but not limited to the expenses of maintenance and protection of the Currency as required by 28 U.S.C. § 1921.

Respectfully submitted this 14<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2024.

DENA J. KING  
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY


/s/ Seth Johnson

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**VERIFICATION**

I declare under penalty of perjury that the factual information contained in the foregoing Complaint is true and correct according to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

Executed on the 12th day of June, 2024.

  
SFO Joshua Hendrick  
Drug Enforcement Administration